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ABSTRACT

The report includes the following tables on the need for rehabilitation counselors in the West: the number of employed counselors, the degree status of employed counselors, the annual demand for rehabilitation counselors, a summary of this annual demand, estimates of the future annual demands, and the estimated demands for counselors by categories. Tables are also presented concerning the supply of rehabilitation counselors, the employment status of graduates, the projected enrollment of full-time students, the deterrents to expansion of student enrollment, the need for doctoral level personnel, and the expected number of doctoral level graduates. Also provided is a summary of the supply and demand of trained counselors. (JM)

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REHABILITATION COUNSELORS FOR THE WEST

A Brief Report of a Regional Survey by the
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

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WICHE

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REHABILITATION COUNSELORS FOR THE WEST

A Brief Report of a Regional Survey by the
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
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February 1968

PREFACE

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education has long been interested in manpower supply and demand and in problems relating to the rehabilitation of the handicapped. A survey concerning the need for rehabilitation counselors in the West is one example of the activities of WICHE's Special Education and Rehabilitation Program. This program is one of a number of mental health and related programs which are designed to assist the western states in working together on major problems in manpower, education, and research.

Acknowledgments are due Dr. James R. Galloway, former Director of WICHE's Special Education and Rehabilitation Program, who was responsible for most of the preliminary work in initiating this study, and members of the program's Advisory Committee who contributed time in reviewing the manuscript. In addition, it should be noted that the respondents from all of the participating institutions and agencies, who provided the information upon which this study is based, made this report possible by their willing cooperation.

It is hoped that this report will stimulate increased interest in the field of rehabilitation, particularly in counselor education.

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Western Interstate Commission
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Boulder, Colorado
February, 1968

CONTENTS

Introduction vii

Part I—Need for Rehabilitation Counselors in the West 1

Table I (Number of Employed Counselors) 1

Table II (Degree Status of Employed Counselors) 2

Table III (Annual Demand for Rehabilitation Counselors) 2

Table IV (Summary of Annual Demand for Rehabilitation Counselors) 3

Table V (Estimates of Future Annual Demand for Rehabilitation Counselors) 3

Table VI (Estimated Demand for Counselors by Categories) 4

Part II—The Supply of Rehabilitation Counselors in the West 5

Table VII (Employment Status of Graduates) 5

Table VIII (Projected Enrollment of Full-Time Students) 6

Table IX (Deterrents to Expansion of Student Enrollment) 6

Table X (Need for Doctoral Level Personnel) 7

Table XI (Expected Doctoral Level Graduates) 7

Part III—Supply and Demand—A Summary 9

Table XII (Supply and Demand of Trained Counselors) 9

INTRODUCTION

It has long been felt that the West suffers from a critical shortage of trained rehabilitation counselors for its handicapped population and from a lack of college and university training programs equipped to train these counselors. However, there have been few regional studies to support this contention and practically no systematic planning to overcome shortages where they exist. In 1965, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education was asked by several different groups in the West to study this problem.

WICHE is a non-profit, public agency created by the 13 western states to administer the Western Regional Educational Compact, which became operative in 1953. The Compact is an agreement among the states to cooperate in order to provide acceptable and efficient educational facilities and programs to meet the needs of the West.

The West has a special need for interstate cooperation in higher education. It has a young, exploding population. The median age is under 28 years, and the population is increasing at a much faster rate than in the country as a whole.

The West is a large area of vast spaces and low population concentration. The WICHE region encompasses almost half the United States land area, but it has an average of only 25 persons per square mile with eight of the states having less than half this average.

The West has a high demand for educational services. The residents of the WICHE states average nearly two years more in median school years completed than the national average. With only 15 percent of the total U.S. population, the WICHE region accounts for more than 21 percent of the total U.S. enrollment in institutions of higher education. These elements—a young and exploding population, vast open spaces, and high demand—point to interstate cooperation as a most effective way of providing a wide range of educational opportunities to students while fully utilizing limited and often very expensive facilities and resources with a minimum of duplication.[1]

Background

In response to a growing public concern, rehabilitation agencies in recent years have rapidly expanded their services for disabled adults. Progress in the past five years has been good in the West, but rapid population growth and other factors have so accentuated the personnel shortage in this field that today it is even more acute. Many western agencies are unable to establish or extend programs even though adequate financing and community support have been assured because large numbers of qualified counselors with the needed special skills are not available.

This report is based on a survey which was designed to provide broad estimates of need, demand, and supply of rehabilitation counselors in the

whole western region. It does not provide many specific kinds of information which individual states may find important in planning for increased numbers of rehabilitation counselors in their agency programs. In some cases, however, the "gap" between supply and demand would seem to indicate that each western state must do more than it has done so far. The figures presented here suggest that the West must become more aware of its need for rehabilitation counselors and must *plan* to meet this problem squarely. A primary purpose of the WICHE rehabilitation study was to provide the special education and rehabilitation program with data which might be useful in conducting conferences, suggesting areas of needed research, and stimulating interest among counselor educators and state and private agency personnel in studying manpower utilization as it relates to rehabilitation services in the West.

The purpose of this report is to provide factual information and comments which may serve to assist programs in developing useful guidelines and/or to facilitate more specific inquiry into problems relating to manpower in rehabilitation.

Findings herein reported were derived primarily from data reported in 1965-66 in questionnaires completed by rehabilitation personnel in western states. This is a preliminary report. Future publications utilizing these data will be supplemented by information obtained from individual western states and from rehabilitation seminars and conferences conducted by WICHE in 1967-68.

Questionnaires were initially mailed to counselor educators, state rehabilitation agencies, and a number of private agencies in the West. At that time, there were only seven colleges and universities conducting RSA (VRA) supported counselor training programs in the WICHE region. One hundred percent of these institutions returned questionnaires. Since that time, five additional programs have emerged. They are located at the University of Washington, University of Southern California, San Diego State College, Sacramento State College, and Eastern Montana College.

All but one public agency in the WICHE region responded to the questionnaire. Both the general and blind agencies were surveyed. State agencies assisted in identifying private agencies which were known to employ rehabilitation counselors within their respective states. Private agency data can only be interpreted as individual program responses and not responses which are necessarily representative of the western region since only 12 agencies returned questionnaires and since those which were returned came from only two states, California and Colorado.

Part I

NEED FOR REHABILITATION COUNSELORS IN THE WEST

The first phase of this report is concerned with the tabulation of data regarding need for rehabilitation counselors in general state agencies, agencies for the blind, and private agencies. The following public agencies responded to the questionnaire:

State	*General Agency*	*Blind Agency*
Arizona	General Agency	Blind Agency
California	General Agency	Blind Agency
Colorado	General Agency	Blind Agency
Hawaii	General Agency	Blind Agency
Idaho	General Agency	Blind Agency
Montana	General Agency	Blind Agency
Nevada	General Agency	Blind Agency
New Mexico	General Agency	Blind Agency
Oregon	General Agency	—
Utah	General Agency	Blind Agency
Washington	General Agency	Blind Agency
Wyoming	General Agency	Blind Agency

Although private agencies in all 13 states, recommended by the respective state directors, were sent questionnaires, only 12 responses from private agencies representing California and Colorado were received. These data regarding private agencies cannot be considered representative of private agency need for trained counselors throughout the region. In lieu of more factual data in this regard, the reader is offered the rule of thumb that private agency need for counselors is roughly equivalent to that of the state programs.[2]

Table I contains figures concerning the number of employed counselors at the time of survey. These figures include supervisory positions such as district supervisors, chiefs of field services, those working in other facilities, etc.

Table I

NUMBER OF EMPLOYED COUNSELORS

	General Agencies	*Blind Agencies*	*Private Agencies*
Full-Time	807	39	104
Part-Time	29	5	24
TOTAL	836	44	128

Table II indicates the degree status of these employed counselors.

Table II

DEGREE STATUS OF EMPLOYED COUNSELORS

	General	*Blind*	*Private*
Persons not classified as counselors, serving as aides, assistants, etc.	77	1	31
Persons with a bachelor's degree—classified as counselors	327	24	41
Persons with master's degree from VRA training program	180	7	24
Persons with master's degree in area other than rehabilitation counseling	252	12	32

Table III shows the number of counselors added to agency staffs for replacement and new positions during fiscal years 1963, 1964, and 1965.

Table III

ANNUAL DEMAND FOR REHABILITATION COUNSELORS

	M.A.—Rehab. Coun.			*M.A.—Other*			*Other*		
1963	*Gen.*	*Blind*	*Priv.*	*Gen.*	*Blind*	*Priv.*	*Gen.*	*Blind*	*Priv.*
Expansion	20	2	7	4	—	6	17	—	8
Replacement	15	1	—	5	—	—	8	1	—
TOTAL	35	3	7	9	—	6	25	1	8
1964									
Expansion	72	3	12	8	—	4	42	—	16
Replacement	14	2	4	4	—	3	14	1	4
TOTAL	86	5	16	12	—	7	56	1	20
1965									
Expansion	50	2	13	17	2	6	75	2	17
Replacement	57	5	5	8	—	5	27	1	3
TOTAL	107	7	18	25	2	11	102	3	20

Table IV

SUMMARY OF ANNUAL DEMAND FOR REHABILITATION COUNSELORS

	1963	*1964*	*1965*
General Agencies			
Expansion	41	122	142
Replacement	28	32	92
TOTAL	69	154	234
Blind Agencies			
Expansion	2	3	6
Replacement	2	3	6
TOTAL	4	6	12
Private Agencies			
Expansion	21	32	36
Replacement	21	11	13
TOTAL	42	43	49
GRAND TOTAL	115	203	295

Based on estimates of the number of new positions and the number of replacement positions that would be made available, Table V presents the agencies' estimates of need for rehabilitation counselors for fiscal years 1966, 1967, and 1968.

Table V

ESTIMATES OF FUTURE ANNUAL DEMAND FOR REHABILITATION COUNSELORS

	1966	*1967*	*1968*
General Agencies			
Expansion	111	139	138
Replacement	61	51	71
TOTAL	172	190	209
Blind Agencies			
Expansion	4	6	2
Replacement	5	2	1
TOTAL	9	8	3
Private Agencies			
Expansion	19	26	18
Replacement	18	14	15
TOTAL	37	40	33
GRAND TOTAL	218	238	245

Based on the projected figures just presented, Table VI presents the estimated number of counselors needed in various job categories.

Table VI

ESTIMATED DEMAND FOR COUNSELORS BY CATEGORIES

	1966		*1967*		*1968*	
	Gen.	*Priv.*	*Gen.*	*Priv.*	*Gen.*	*Priv.*
General Caseload	83	5	93	14	125	12
Mentally Retarded	18	14	22	10	20	14
Emotionally Disturbed	16	9	17	7	13	2
Visually Handicapped	1	—	1	—	1	—
Deaf	5	—	4	—	6	—
Disability Examiner	14	—	20	—	19	—
Intake	4	1	13	3	9	1
Placement	7	2	13	3	10	2
Welfare	10	—	1	—	3	—
Parole	14	—	6	—	1	—
Workshop	—	3	—	2	—	1
Chronic	—	2	—	—	—	—
Research	—	1	—	1	—	1
TOTAL	172	37	190	40	207	33

When asked to describe their preference for academic background of newly employed rehabilitation counselors, all agencies reported a first preference for those with training in rehabilitation counseling at the master's degree level. General guidance and counseling and education were listed as second and third preference by most directors. However, all agencies reported difficulty in recruiting individuals with training in rehabilitation and reported education as the most frequent background of those actually employed, with guidance and counseling second, and rehabilitation third. Although the master's degree is preferred by almost all agencies as an entrance requirement, about two-thirds of those reporting will accept the bachelor's degree as a minimum requirement and frequently employ individuals at this level. Only two agencies reported difficulty in recruiting individuals at the bachelor's degree level.

However, once employed, these bachelor's degree level counselors are encouraged to continue their education as evidenced by the fact that, at the time of reporting, 197 employed counselors were engaged in continuing education activities in relationship with a college or university graduate program.

The areas of competition from other agencies who hire counseling personnel and low salary were listed by an overwhelming majority as the factors which cause the most difficulty when trying to recruit rehabilitation counselors. Only two public agencies reported that they employ a full-time person to recruit and hire rehabilitation counselors for their programs.

Part II

THE SUPPLY OF REHABILITATION COUNSELORS IN THE WEST

Necessarily, emphasis in this study has been placed on the counselor with specialized training. Assuming that the training of such specialists is a major goal of the rehabilitation counseling profession, we have adopted as our basic criteria for specialized training the sequence of graduate preparation found in the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)[3] approved programs.

Sequences of this type, and the specialists trained therein, are given major emphasis here. This is not intended to imply that there is no worth in the many short courses and staff development programs offered in the rehabilitation field by western institutions. These courses are extremely valuable in acquainting other professionals with rehabilitation, or in helping counselors who cannot get a full specialized sequence of preparation, but who, nevertheless, must be responsible for the rehabilitation of disabled individuals. Many states in this region and the nation still require very little training for employment as a rehabilitation counselor. Moreover, personnel with only a modicum of training in rehabilitation counseling must still provide valuable services to disabled individuals until the supply of specialists is greatly increased.

Within these limits, we have attempted to amass a comprehensive overview of the training activity in rehabilitation counseling among the western colleges and universities. The large and ready response to our queries from all the training institutions leads us to hope that we have done this.

At the time of investigation, the following institutions of higher education were conducting RSA supported rehabilitation counselor training programs: University of Arizona, California State College at Los Angeles, Colorado State College, University of Hawaii, University of Oregon, San Francisco State College, and University of Utah.

All of the above counselor training institutions responded to the questionnaire. Since that time, a number of additional institutions have received planning and/or training grants from the RSA. Data from these schools are not reflected in this report.

Table VII indicates the number of students graduating during the years 1963, 1964, and 1965 and the nature of their employment.

Table VII

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF GRADUATES

	1963	*1964*	*1965*	*Total*
Number Graduated	50	55	77	182
Employed by State Agencies	28	36	51	115
Employed by Private Agencies	7	9	15	31
Other (Higher Education, Advanced Training, etc.)	15	10	11	36

Of significance is the percentage of graduates who chose to seek employment by state agencies. From a total of 182 graduates, 63 percent were employed by state agencies, 17 percent by private agencies, and 20 percent continued working on an advanced degree, were employed by an institution of higher education, or accepted employment outside the field of rehabilitation. However, less than 50 percent of the total number of graduates were reported to have been initially employed in the 13 western states.

At the time of investigation (1965-66 academic year) the reporting institutions indicated a total enrollment of 242 full-time and 54 part-time students. Of this number, 206 were attending the school on VRA traineeships. Most training programs in the West anticipated increased enrollments during the next several years, as shown by Table VIII.

Table VIII

PROJECTED ENROLLMENT OF FULL-TIME STUDENTS

	1965-66	*1966-67*	*1967-68*	*1968-69*
VRA Trainees	206	307	370	420
Non-VRA Trainees	36	52	63	75
TOTAL	242	359	433	495

As can be seen by the above figures, it is anticipated that the total number of VRA trainees would increase by almost one-third in 1966-67 and 1968-69. It is also anticipated that the number of students enrolled in programs but not on VRA traineeships would increase proportionately.

An interesting fact concerning the existing programs and utilization of resources was that most programs felt that they could accommodate significantly more trainees with only minor adjustments in their training programs. When asked the question "Given current staff and internship resources, indicate the maximum number of students your program could accommodate yearly," the reply was 475, as compared to 242 actually enrolled. It thus appears that, with existing facilities and staff, the total combined resources of the reporting rehabilitation counselor training programs could accommodate 51 percent more trainees.

When asked to indicate, by priority listing, the major deterrents to expansion of student enrollment beyond current potential, a number of factors were listed, as shown in Table IX.

Table IX

DETERRENTS TO EXPANSION OF STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Nature of Deterrent	*Number of Schools Listing*
Space for Facilities	7
Professional Staff	5
Lack of Qualified Candidates	5
Insufficient Number of Traineeships	5
Philosophy Regarding Enrollment Size	2
Inadequate Field Work Resources	1

In regard to the nature of the students being trained at these institutions, all schools indicated psychology as the preferred and the most frequent undergraduate academic background with education and social science the next most frequent. Of the 206 students enrolled at the time of reporting, 9 percent had previous experience in rehabilitation counseling and 16 percent in the field of guidance and counseling, while 75 percent of the beginning students had no previous experience in fields related to counseling.

All programs reported personal contact with undergraduates at their own institutions and other schools as the most productive procedure in recruiting applicants for their training programs. The use of pamphlets, brochures, posters, etc., was reported as the second most popular recruitment technique, but not nearly as effective as the personal contact.

The most difficult problems in recruiting qualified graduate students were listed as competition from related areas, lower salaries in rehabilitation, lack of awareness of the profession, and insufficient traineeships.

In the area of doctoral training for the profession of rehabilitation counseling, Table X indicates the anticipated need for doctoral level personnel for the years 1966, 1967, and 1968.

Table X

NEED FOR DOCTORAL LEVEL PERSONNEL

	1966	*1967*	*1968*	*Total*
Replacement				
Universities	6	1	2	9
State Agencies	1	1	1	3
Private Agencies	3	4	4	11
New Positions				
Universities	8	6	6	20
State Agencies	0	2	5	7
Private Agencies	9	8	8	25
TOTAL	27	22	26	75

Table XI indicates the expected number of doctoral graduates from rehabilitation counselor training programs in the West.

Table XI

EXPECTED DOCTORAL LEVEL GRADUATES

	1966	*1967*	*1968*	*Total*
Number	7	15	19	41

In addition to their regular training programs for full-time students, five of the reporting institutions indicated that they have organized agreements with state rehabilitation agencies whereby they provide inservice training to employed counselors. This training takes the form of credit

work taken at night and with released time, as well as non-credit short-term workshops and institutes.

When asked to list their opinions as to why more students have not chosen to seek employment in state vocational rehabilitation agencies, the most common ones given were: low salaries, rigidly bound procedures, lack of prestige, and lack of interest on the part of state agencies for trained personnel. The respondents indicated that only seven graduates from their training programs encountered problems in establishing themselves as rehabilitation counselors during the past two years. The basic reasons for this were given as lack of geographic mobility on the part of the student or possession of a severe physical disability.

Finally, when asked what step they were taking to encourage or develop undergraduate training in rehabilitation within the next two years, all programs indicated no steps were currently being taken. A few schools were moving one or two introductory courses to the undergraduate level, but this was primarily for recruitment purposes and not part of an organized undergraduate sequence.

The strength of rehabilitation programs in state and private agencies depends in large part on the leadership provided. No data were gathered on the extent of the specialized preparation of the West's supervisors of rehabilitation counseling, but because of the initial shortage of trained personnel it has been necessary in the past for many of these persons to start their duties without a specialized background, and to get special training on the job. Even under these conditions, their contributions cannot be underestimated; however, in the years ahead plans should be made to ensure facilities for the training of personnel for supervisory roles in rehabilitation.

Part III

SUPPLY AND DEMAND—A SUMMARY

TABLE XII

SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF TRAINED COUNSELORS*

	1963	*1964*	*1965*	*1966***	*1967***	*1968***
Supply	50	55	77	121	179	217
Demand	115	204	295	218	238	245

*M.A. in Rehabilitation Counseling **Estimates

When we keep in mind the demand that will be created by new legislative programs, not reflected in this data, the fact that only 12 private agencies in the West returned questionnaires, the previous experience of less than 50 percent of university graduates seeking initial employment in the 13 western states, and the fact that an undetermined number of individuals listed as "graduates" are not new additions to the manpower pool, but rather already employed counselors on educational leave or completing an in-service training program, we can already see that the needs of the West for trained rehabilitation manpower are great and cannot soon be met by the present training programs unless they are vastly expanded.

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[1]For more information, see *This is WICHE*, a brochure published by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

[2]U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. *Increasing the Supply of Qualified Rehabilitation Counselors: Guidelines for Action.* Washington, D.C.: Vocational Rehabilitation Administration, May, 1965, p. 2.

[3]Formerly Vocational Rehabilitation Administration.

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